

Message Text

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ACTION EA-06

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FM AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4591

INFO AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

AMEMBASSY TAIPEI

CINCPAC

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 SINGAPORE 0787

LIMDIS

CINCPAC ALSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MASS, SN

SUBJ: NEED FOR U.S. POLICY REVIEW OF SINGAPORE PURCHASES OF
MILITARY EQUIPMENT

SUMMARY: EMBASSY WISHES TO SIGNAL LATEST GTE REQUESTS TO PURCHASE FIVE LSTS AND 217 APCS BECAUSE WE BELIEVE IMPLICATIONS OF THESE PROPOSED MILITARY EQUIPMENT ACQUISITIONS SHOULD BE THOROUGHLY CONSIDERED BEFORE FINAL USG ACTION IS TAKEN APPROVING THESE REQUESTS. GOS IS CLEARLY MOVING WITH GREAT DESPATCH TO TRAIN ITS GROUND FORCES AND ACQUIRE NECESSARY EQUIPMENT DESIGNED TO PROVIDE THE NECESSARY CAPABILITY OF IMPLEMENTING SINGAPORE'S FORWARD DEFENSE STRATEGY WHICH GOS OFFICIALS CANDIDLY EXPLAINED TO THE CROWE/SHACKLEY MISSION LAST SUMMER. USG ACTION IN APPROVING OR DISAPPROVING THESE AS WELL AS FUTURE EQUIPMENT REQUESTS MAY WELL PRECIPITATE ADVERSE REACTIONS FROM EITHER GOS OR GOM DEPENDING ON NATURE OF PARTICULAR DECISION. THESE REACTIONS ARE PROBABLY MANAGEABLE. HOWEVER, WE THINK CENTRAL ISSUE IS EXTENT TO WHICH U.S. SHOULD BECOME INVOLVED IN SUPPLYING MILITARY EQUIPMENT TO SINGAPORE WHEN IT IS FAIRLY CLEAR THE

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EQUIPMENT IS BEING PURCHASED TO DEVELOP A CAPABILITY TO IMPLEMENT

SINGAPORE'S FORWARD DEFENSE STRATEGY WHICH INVOLVES POSSIBILITY OF MILITARY INTERVENTION IN MALAYSIA WITH OR WITHOUT GOM CONSENT. BOTH EMBASSY AND WASHINGTON AGENCIES SHOULD BEGIN NOW TO ADDRESS THIS ISSUE WEIGHING CAREFULLY THE TOTALITY OF U.S. INTERESTS IN SINGAPORE AND THE REGION; OTHERWISE WE COULD SLIDE GRADUALLY INTO A POLICY OF PROVIDING VIRTUALLY ALL OF THE EQUIPMENT GOS REQUESTS WITHOUT CLEARLY RECOGNIZING FULL IMPLICATIONS OF DOING SO. IN MEANTIME WE WILL DEFER OFFERING GOS MORE THAN 3 LSTS AND 75 APCS UNTIL DEPARTMENT HAS REACHED POLICY DECISION ON THIS MATTER. END SUMMARY.

1. DAO IS REPORTING SEPARATELY LETTER RECEIVED FROM PERMSEC FOR DEFENSE PANG TEE POW REQUESTING PURCHASE OF 5 EXCESS LSTS WHICH MINDEF TEAM HAS ALREADY INSPECTED AT SASEBO, JAPAN. PREVIOUS CORRESPONDENCE FROM PANG STATES GOS PRIMARY INTEREST IN OBTAINING LSTS IS FOR USE IN MOVING TROOPS AND EQUIPMENT TO TAIWAN FOR TRAINING OR ALTERNATIVELY TO BRUNEI IN EVENT JUNGLE WARFARE SCHOOL IS ESTABLISHED. INITIAL GOS QUERY PROPOSED ACQUISITION OF ONE ADDITIONAL LST. THIS FIGURE WAS SUBSEQUENTLY INCREASED TO THREE PRIOR TO LATEST REQUEST FOR FIVE (EMBASSY HAS ALREADY CONCURRED IN ACQUISITION OF THREE LSTS). SINGAPORE NAVY ALREADY HAS ONE LST IN INVENTORY AND HAS ACCESS TO TWO OTHERS OWNED BY PORT OF SINGAPORE AUTHORITY AND CURRENTLY USED FOR COMMERCIAL PURPOSES.

2. GOS ALSO CURRENTLY CONSIDERING NON-FMS DIRECT PURCHASE FROM FOOD AND MACHINERY CORPORATION (FMC) 217 APCS (M-113AS). FMC OFFER IS REASONABLY PRICED WITH RELATIVELY EARLY DELIVERY DATE (19 MONTHS). FMC HAS ALREADY RECEIVED MUNITIONS CONTROL CLEARANCE TO EXPLORE POSSIBLE SALE OF APCS TO GOS SUBJECT TO FINAL MC CLEARANCE. IN ORDER TO OBTAIN PRICE AND OTHER COMPARISON DATA GOS HAS REQUESTED DAO TO FURNISH PRICE AND DELIVERY DATE FOR PURCHASE OF SAME NUMBER OF APCS UNDER FMS. DEPARTMENT WILL RECALL THAT STATE/DOD AGREED TO SELL TO GOS AS PART OF PACKAGE OF EQUIPMENT REQUESTED DURING VISIT OF CROWE/SHACKLEY MISSION A TOTAL OF 75 APCS (SAF ALREADY HAS 206 APCS IN ITS INVENTORY). IT IS NOW CLEAR THAT GOS HAS DECIDED TO PURCHASE A TOTAL OF 217 APCS INSTEAD OF 75 REQUESTED EARLIER. IF USG CONSENTS TO THIS PURCHASE, GOS WILL HAVE A TOTAL OF 423 APCS IN ITS INVENTORY IN ADDITION TO 200 V-200 ARMORED CARS WHICH IT HOPES TO PHASE OUT

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OVER NEXT FEW YEARS (GOS HAS MADE BELATED DISCOVERY THAT ARMORED CARS ARE USELESS OFF MAIN ROADS).

3. COMMENT: EMBASSY IS SIGNALLING THESE REQUESTS TO DEPARTMENT AND OTHER ADDRESSEE POSTS BECAUSE WE BELIEVE IMPLICATIONS OF THESE ACQUISITIONS SHOULD BE THOROUGHLY CONSIDERED BEFORE FINAL MUNITIONS CONTROL CLEARANCES OR OTHER USG ACTIONS APPROVING THESE REQUESTS ARE TAKEN.

4. FROM ALL AVAILABLE EVIDENCE GOS IS MOVING WITH GREAT DESPATCH TO INCREASE GREATLY THE TRAINING OF ITS GROUND FORCES IN TAIWAN (SINGAPORE 0696). FURTHERMORE, IT IS MOVING RAPIDLY TO ACQUIRE THE NECESSARY EQUIPMENT TO CARRY OUT THE FORWARD DEFENSE STRATEGY WHICH GOS OFFICIALS CANDIDLY EXPLAINED TO CROWE/SHACKLEY MISSION -- E.G., IF INTERNAL SECURITY SITUATION IN MALAYSIA WERE TO DETERIORATE SERIOUSLY (AND GOS BELIEVES IT WILL IN NEXT 3-5 YEARS), GOS WILL OFFER ITS ARMED FORCES TO ASSIST GOM. IF GOM REJECTS OFFER, GOS WILL INTERVENE ANYWAY IF IT BELIEVES "WORST CASE" SITUATION ON WHICH SINGAPORE'S DEFENSIVE STRATEGY IS PREDICATED HAS ARRIVED, E.G., SINGAPORE'S SECURITY IS BEING THREATENED.

5. IF U.S. WERE TO TURN DOWN EITHER OF THESE REQUESTS OR FAIL TO GRANT NECESSARY MC CLEARANCES, WASHINGTON AGENCIES SHOULD RECOGNIZE THAT IT WILL HAVE ADVERSE IMPACT ON U.S./SINGAPORE RELATIONS. GOS WILL BE CONCERNED AND MAY WELL DECIDE TO RAISE QUESTION AT HIGHER POLITICAL LEVEL. HOWEVER, EMBASSY BELIEVES THE ADVERSE IMPACT OF A NEGATIVE DECISION OR A DECISION TO APPROVE ONLY PART OF A SPECIFIC REQUEST WOULD BE MANAGEABLE.

6. ALTHOUGH WE WOULD DEFER TO EMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR'S JUDGMENT, WE WOULD ASSUME THAT THE STRAIN ON MALAYSIAN/U.S. BILATERAL RELATIONS AS THE RESULT OF ACCEDING TO THESE TWO REQUESTS WOULD BE CONSIDERABLY LESS THAN THE STRAIN WHICH A DENIAL WOULD EXERT ON U.S./SINGAPORE RELATIONS. GIVEN THE SIZEABLE EQUIPMENT

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ACTION EA-06

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FM AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4592

INFO AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

AMEMBASSY TAIPEI

CINCPAC

S E C R E T SECTION 2 OF 2 SINGAPORE 0787

LIMDIS

PACKAGE THE U.S. IS PROVIDING TO GOM WITH FMS CREDIT, THE MALAYSIANS WOULD NOT BE IN A PARTICULARLY GOOD POSITION TO CRITICIZE U.S. SALES TO SINGAPORE EVEN THOUGH THE GOM PRE-SUMABLY INTENDS TO USE ALL OF ITS EQUIPMENT INSIDE MALAYSIA AND DOES NOT HAVE A FORWARD DEFENSE STRATEGY SIMILAR TO SINGAPORE'S CALLING FOR THE POSSIBLE USE OF SUCH EQUIPMENT IN A NEIGHBORING COUNTRY. IN THIS RESPECT, CAN EMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR ADVISE WHETHER GOM HAS ANY CONTINGENCY PLAN TO INTERVENE IN SOUTHERN THAILAND IF THE RTG MAKES NO PROGRESS IN ELIMINATING COMMUNIST INSURGENT SANCTUARIES? (WE ALSO NOTE THAT LSTS AND APCs ARE STANDARD ITEMS IN INVENTORIES OF MOST ARMED FORCES, AND WE WOULD ASSUME THAT OUR SALE OF THESE TWO ITEMS TO SINGAPORE IN AMOUNTS REQUESTED WOULD NOT RAISE IMMEDIATE ALARM BELLS IN KUALA LUMPUR).

7. WHILE THESE POINTS MAY BE RELEVANT IN ASSESSING THE REACTION OF EITHER GOVERNMENT, THEY DO NOT ADDRESS THE CENTRAL ISSUE -- E.G., IN THE ABSENCE OF MALAYSIAN/SINGAPORE COOPERATION ON COUNTERINSURGENCY, TO WHAT EXTENT IS IT IN THE U.S. INTEREST TO BECOME INVOLVED IN SUPPLYING MILITARY EQUIPMENT TO SINGAPORE WHEN IT IS FAIRLY CLEAR THE EQUIPMENT IS BEING PURCHASED TO DEVELOP A CAPABILITY TO CARRY OUT SINGAPORE'S FORWARD DEFENSE STRATEGY. IT SHOULD BE RECOGNIZED THE TWO REQUESTS CITED IN SECRET

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PARA 1 AND 2 SHOULD NOT BE VIEWED IN ISOLATION. GOS ALSO HAS UNDER CONSIDERATION PURCHASE OF 20 UH-1H AND 10 BELL 214 HELICOPTERS, AS WELL AS 18 HOWITZERS AND IS EXPLORING POSSIBILITY OF PURCHASING OR ACQUIRING TECHNICAL DATA TO BUILD ON ITS OWN SMALL RIVERINE CRAFT, ITEMS WHICH STATE AND DOD HAVE ALREADY APPROVED. THE EMBASSY PLANS TO ADDRESS THIS ISSUE IN ITS FORTHCOMING PARA ASSESSMENT, BUT BELIEVES WASHINGTON AGENCIES SHOULD BEGIN NOW TO STUDY THIS PROBLEM. OTHERWISE, IN THE PROCESS OF MAKING AD HOC DECISIONS ON SEPARATE EQUIPMENT REQUESTS WE COULD SLIDE GRADUALLY INTO A POLICY OF PROVIDING WITHOUT SIGNIFICANT LIMITATION VIRTUALLY ALL OF THE EQUIPMENT THE GOS REQUESTS TO SUPPORT ITS FORWARD DEFENSE STRATEGY WITHOUT CLEARLY RECOGNIZING FULL IMPLICATIONS OF DOING SO. IN REACHING A POSITION BELIEVE ALL CONCERNED SHOULD EXAMINE AND WEIGH THE TOTALITY OF U.S. INTERESTS IN SINGAPORE AND THE REGION -- E.G., U.S. NAVAL ACCESS TO BUNKERING AND REPAIR FACILITIES, AS WELL AS GOS INTEREST IN ACCOMMODATING U.S. STRATEGIC INTERESTS SUCH AS POSSIBLE P-3 FLIGHTS IF WE ARE FORCED TO GIVE UP OUR BASE IN UTAPAO. MOREOVER, IN EVENT "WORST CASE" SITUATION SHOULD ARRIVE, IT CLEARLY WOULD BE IN U.S. INTERESTS TO HAVE SINGAPORE (AND WITH IT ACCESS TO STRAITS OF MALACCA) REMAIN IN FRIENDLY HANDS.

8. IN THE MEANTIME, EMBASSY RECOMMENDS WE DEFER DECISION ON SELLING MORE THAN 3 LSTS (WHICH WE HAVE ALREADY INDICATED WE WOULD BE WILLING TO SELL) UNTIL WE HAVE A CLEARER PICTURE OF OUR OVER-ALL POLICY IN THIS AREA. ALTHOUGH DAO HAS REQUESTED PRICE AND AVAILABILITY DATA TO BE INCLUDED IN LETTER OF OFFER FOR 217 APCS, EMBASSY WILL DEFER OFFERING MORE THAN 75 APCS UNTIL DEPARTMENT HAS REACHED POLICY DECISION ON THIS MATTER. HOLDRIDGE

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